



HOW DO SCHOOLS FAIL TO ATTRACT OUR STUDENTS?

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ABSTRACT

Background: It is widely accepted that belonging to group such as school, families and communities contribute in a number of dimensions of well being of an individual. These dimensions may include general life satisfaction, cognitive performance, academic work and physical health. If an individual has weak social ties, feel socially disconnected and experience anomie - a mismatch between individual and community norms and values, there are greater chances of poor mental health. Young people spend much of their time within the school environment; therefore it must be interesting to study the school context (school connectedness, ethos and contextual factors such as school size or denomination) on the part of students and how they relate it to their well being. The aim of the present study is to explore school ethos among higher secondary students.

Method: A school based descriptive study was conducted to explore school ethos as regarded by higher secondary students. SEM (MacBeath et al., 1992) was used as a measure of school ethos. 666 students (Male = 226, female = 440) were selected as participants. Results: Only 10% students were found to have positive perception towards their school.

Conclusion: A very low percentage of students have positive attitude towards their school. Schools fail to attract students. Therefore, it is needed that to make our schools student friendly and safe and to work in the direction of making our classes attractive and more interactive which will help students to feel more associated and comfortable with school.

KEYWORDS: School Ethos, Suicidal Behavior.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

We still live in a society where student's performance outcomes are much more emphasized on the account of their social connectedness because students' success is assumed to be the utmost priority of education now a day. But this is not the ultimate goal of education. Education should be imparted for the well being of students so that they can be able to lead a healthy life and what can be a better agent than school for the sake of health promotion of students? Schools have been a popular setting for health promotion and health education (WHO, 2005). Early programs focused on teaching children about health and its determinants, but the importance of enabling them to develop the skills to resist unhealthy lifestyles was soon recognized. Most programs now teach these skills (WHO, 2006). All these training programs and activities, either curricular or co-curricular or related with well being of students, are for the sake of students but we will get success in our mission only when students who are our target group will accept it wholeheartedly and a positive change in their outlook and lifestyle is emerged. Ironically, many a time, we come across the fact that students don't want to go to school, they are reluctant in their study, and we have overloaded them with their studies (MHRD, GOI, 1993). What does go wrong here? Are we missing something and lacking behind in our motive of school setting? School is supposed to be an agent characterized by caring and supportive interpersonal relationships, opportunities to participate in school activities and decision making, and shared norms, goals, and value (MacMillan & Chavis, 1986). It is widely accepted that belonging to group such as school, families and communities contribute in a number of dimensions of well being of an individual. These dimensions may include general life satisfaction, cognitive performance, academic work and physical health. Developmental theories also emphasize on the importance of emotional development among children. At least three child and adolescent development theories provide a central role for bonding: attachment theory, control theory, and the social development model. Attachment theory describes a process through which interactions between parents and infant establish internal working models for how a child forms social connections with others (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1973, 1979, 1982; Mahler & Bergman, 1975). If an individual has weak social ties, feel socially disconnected and experience anomie - a mismatch between individual and community norms and values, there are greater chances of poor mental health. When this social support system in schools which involves peer group relationship, teacher student's relationship, teacher support, school bonding etc. gets unbalanced, the well being of students are also effected proportionally. All the factors in school periphery like teacher support, school bonding, teacher student relationship if present in a school foster a sense of belongingness among students which is an important factor of an individual's life as a sense of belonging to groups and networks has been associated with self-esteem, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction (Daley & Buchanan, 1999; Haslam, Jetten, & Postmes, 2009), ease of transition from adolescence to adulthood (Jetten, Haslam, & Postmes, 2009), and coping ability (Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Lewis, & Schaps, 1999). Belonging in school has been shown to be important, fostering self-esteem and self-identity (Lee & Robbins, 1998; Nutbrown & Clough, 2009) and managing stress (Jacobsson, Pousette, & Thylefors, 2001; Hale, 1998).

Timely studies have now sought to reposition issues of trust as foundation to effectiveness in schools (e.g. Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hargreaves, 2002). Studies have shown that students who experience their school as a community enjoy school more, are more academically motivated, are absent less often, engage in less disruptive behavior, and have higher achievement than students who do not (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Battistich, 1995). Looking at the research arena in Indian context, it is still under development and very little is carried out to know the actual status of students that what and how do they feel about their school. Are they connected to their school? Do they feel themselves as a part of their school? What are the relationship status of students with their teacher and peer group? Therefore, to find out the answer of following questions which were emerged out after the review of related literature, present study is designed.

1. What is the teenage student's perception of school ethos?
2. Is school ethos of higher secondary students vary according to their following variables:
 - Gender
 - Grade of study
 - Stream of study
 - Board of school (CBSE Board/State Board)

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS USED:

School Ethos: The ethos of a school is a self conscious expression of specific types of objective in relation to behavior and values (Torrington & Weightman, 1989).

In the present study, school ethos will be treated as a composite of school involvement (e.g. feeling part of school, able to share worries with teachers); school engagement (e.g. thinking school a waste of time, skipping school); and teacher pupil relationships as perceived by students.

Higher secondary Students: The term higher secondary students refer to the students studying in 11th & 12th standards of Varanasi city.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study school ethos as perceived by higher secondary students
- To study whether school ethos of higher secondary students vary with respect to their
 - Gender
 - Grade of study
 - Stream of study
 - Board of school (CBSE Board/State Board)

ASSUMPTION & HYPOTHESIS:**Assumption:**

School ethos as perceived by higher secondary students is observable and measurable.

Hypotheses:

There is no significant difference in school ethos of higher secondary students with respect to their

H₀1 Gender

H₀2 Grade of study

H₀3 Stream of study

H₀4 Board of school (CBSE Board/State Board)

METHODOLOGY:**Research Approach:**

Quantitative research approach is applied to achieve the objectives of the present study.

Technique:

Descriptive survey method has been applied to find out the perception of higher secondary students about school which in composite form reflects the school ethos.

Tool:

Pupils' perceptions of school, informed by MacBeath et al.'s school ethos measures (MacBeath et al., 1992) comprised: school environment (physical and teacher-related aspects e.g. playground; teacher control); school involvement (e.g. feeling part of school, able to share worries with teachers); school engagement (e.g. thinking school a waste of time, skipping school); and teacher pupil relationships (single question focusing on how many teachers pupils get on well with). Each measure was standardized. Higher scores represented more negative perceptions.

Adapted version of School Ethos Measure (MacBeath et al, 1992) (36 closed ended items, 1 open ended item; 4 point rating scale) was used for assessing School Ethos (Total Score 0-108). Prior permission was taken from the developer of the tool to adapt and use in the present context.

The tool is divided in three areas:

The school in general: 13 positive items and 2 negative items

The classroom: 6 positive items and 3 negative items

Things that might happen: 4 positive items and 8 negative items

The adapted version of tool consists of 36 closed ended items which is on 4 point rating scale. The total score ranges from 0 to 108.

Scoring

For positive items scoring is done as: Sometimes: 2

All the time: 0 Never: 3

Most of the time: 1 For negative items scoring is done as:

All the time: 3 Sometimes: 1

Most of the time: 2 Never: 0

Population:

All the students studying in 11th and 12th of CBSE and state board schools of Varanasi city comprised as the population for the study.

Sample & Sampling Technique:

Mixed method sampling technique is applied for the present study. Firstly, an area was selected in which maximum cases of suicide was reported and registered which was done by purposive sampling technique and then 10 schools were selected from that particular area. All the students studying in 11th and 12th of selected schools were taken up as the sample for the study. In this way, a total of 738 students were taken up as sample in this stage of sampling of data collection but at the time of data analysis, 666 students were selected because 72 students had filled incomplete data and thus were rejected.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Percentage analysis was done to see the status of school ethos as perceived by students. Kruskal-Wallis test followed by Mann Whitney U test was applied to see the significant difference in school ethos among students with respect to their personal and demographic variables.

RESULTS:**Status of School Ethos as perceived by students:**

66.6 % students (443) were found to have a lower level of positive perception towards school. 23.4 % students (156) had average level of positive perception towards school and 10 % students (67) had higher level of positive perception about school.

Difference in School Ethos among students with respect to their personal and demographic variables**Gender difference in School Ethos:**

One of the objectives of the study was to study if gender difference exists in perception of school ethos. The related null hypothesis was formulated that:

"There is no significant difference among higher secondary students in their perception of school ethos with regard to gender" (H₀1). The hypothesis was tested using Mann-Whitney U test as the data was positively skewed and not normally distributed. Thus, nonparametric statistical test was applied for studying the significant difference among the groups. The table-1 below provides the statistical details:

Table 1: Mean Rank Difference in School Ethos with respect to Gender

Gender	Rank			Test Statistics
	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of ranks	Mann Whitney U
Female	440	342	15047.9	4.59
Male	226	316.95	71631.5	

It is evident from the table-1 that Mann-Whitney (U) value obtained was not significant at .05 level of significance. Therefore, it was concluded that male and female students do not differ significantly in terms of school ethos and the related hypothesis (H₀1) is accepted.

Effect of grade of study on School Ethos:

In order to study the effect of grade of study on school ethos, another null hypothesis was framed that:

"There is no significant difference among higher secondary students in terms of school ethos with respect to grade of study" (H₀2).

The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance using Mann-Whitney U test. The table-2 given below provides the statistical details:

Table 2: Mean rank Difference in School Ethos with respect to Grade of Study

Grade	Rank			Test Statistics
	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U
XI	382	320.84	12256.25	4.94*
XII	284	350.52	99548.5	

*Significant at .05 level of significance

The above table 2 indicated that XII grade students had lower positive perception towards school ethos (Mean rank=350.52) than that of XI grade students (Mean rank=320.84) and this difference was also found significant at .05 level of significance, so the related null hypothesis H₀2 is rejected.

Effect of Academic Stream on School Ethos:

At higher secondary level, students are divided into different study streams, but the major popular stream which is mostly available in all the schools are science, arts and commerce. The highest number of students is also found in these streams. Therefore, in present study too three basic streams i.e., science, arts and commerce have been chosen for the purpose of data analysis.

The related null hypothesis "There is no significant difference among higher secondary students in terms of school ethos with respect to academic stream" (H₀3) was tested using Kruskal-Wallis test at .05 level of significance as the variable was studied in three different groups. Table 3 given below provides the result of the statistical analysis:

Table 3: Mean rank Difference in School Ethos with respect to stream of Study

Stream of Study	Rank		Test Statistics
	N	Mean Rank	Chi Square
Science	281	347.91	9.71*
Arts	271	308.08	
Commerce	114	358.41	

The obtained Chi Square value showed that all the three groups differ significantly in terms of school ethos. In addition to this, students of commerce stream were found to have least favorable perception towards school (mean rank=308.08), followed by the students of science stream (mean rank=347.91) and the most favorable perception towards school was found among students of arts stream (mean rank=358.41). Hence, the related null hypothesis H₀3 was rejected. Since the obtained Chi square value showed that there exists a signifi-

cant difference among the groups, consequent Mann-Whitney test was applied to study the mean rank difference between academic streams.

Mean Rank Differences in School Ethos among Academic Streams

Analysis of the study showed that there exists a significant difference among three groups in school ethos. Therefore, consequent hypothesis was formed by taking two groups mutually and the related null hypothesis was formed. The null hypotheses were

“There is no significant difference among higher secondary students in terms of school ethos with respect to academic stream (Science/Arts)” ($H_{0.1}$), “There is no significant difference among higher secondary students in terms of school ethos with respect to academic stream (Science/Commerce)” ($H_{0.2}$) and “There is no significant difference among higher secondary students in terms of school ethos with respect to academic stream (Arts/Commerce)” ($H_{0.3}$). These hypotheses were tested by using Mann Whitney U test. The results are shown in table- 4 below.

Table 4: Mean Rank Difference between School Ethos with respect to Stream of Study

Stream of Study	Rank			Test Statistics
	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U
Science	281	292.83	82286	3.24*
Arts	271	259.56	70342	
Science	281	196.07	55096.5	1.45
Commerce	114	202.75	23113.5	
Arts	271	184.52	50005	1.31*
Commerce	114	213.16	24300	

*Significant at .05 level of significance

It is evident from the above table (Table-4) that students of science stream and arts do differ significantly in school ethos; significant difference was also found between students of arts and commerce stream. However, no significant difference was found in terms of school ethos between students of science and commerce stream. Therefore, hypotheses $H_{0.1}$ and $H_{0.3}$ were rejected whereas hypothesis $H_{0.2}$ was accepted.

Effect of Board of Study on Suicidal Ideation:

The school ethos among higher secondary students was also analyzed according to board of study i.e., CBSE board & state Board. The related null hypothesis “There is no significant difference among higher secondary students in terms of school ethos with respect to academic board” ($H_{0.4}$) was tested using Mann-Whitney U test at .05 level of significance. The table 5 given below provides the result:

Table 5: Mean Rank Difference in School Ethos with respect to Board of School

Board of School	Rank			Test Statistics
	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann Whitney U
CBSE Board	250	360.95	89240	4.61*
State Board	416	315.24	132900	

*Significant at .05 level of significance

It is clear from the table 5 that there is a significant difference in school ethos of higher secondary students with regard to the board of study in which they are admitted. Hence, the related hypothesis $H_{0.4}$ is rejected and it was concluded that CBSE board students have significantly higher favorable perception towards their school than state board students.

Some verbal expressions of students regarding their school experience

“Ma'm should talk politely in front of others.....yesterday I forgot to bring the book and she yelled at me so bitterly in front of whole classroomI thought of committing suicide and put blame on her.”

“There is a lot of discrimination regarding subject of study. If anyone comes to know that I am from Arts.....They behave in a manner like we are not human.....Oh! You people..... Oh! You are from Arts, aren't you? That's why!!!!!!”

“It feels very bad when attitude of your friends change. Some behave in a manner like they don't even know me.....due to this, I thought about committing suicide.”

CONCLUSION:

As a conclusion it can be said that students have a low favorable perception about their school which indicates about negative school ethos. Due to this negative ethos, our school system fails to attract our students. Sometimes, teachers do not pay attention to students properly. Behavior of peer group, seniors and other

school personnel also contribute in the formation of this kind of perception. We as a stake holder of education system need to work in this direction for the well being of children, so that they can feel safe and connected to school. Then only the real motive of education will be fulfilled.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY:

In the present situation of our society where in a nuclear family, both the parents are working for the better future of their child and in this process of making bright future of their offspring, they somehow lack in paying attention to them for their emotional needs. child has nobody to share his/her feelings, joy and sorrow. In this case, it lays a sole responsibility of school to take care of children. Parents also feel that school should take care of their children, work on their proper development. Therefore, school has an additional responsibility of well being of students. A fair and positive environment helps in all round development of students and opposite to it may lead them to psychological problems. In any school, teacher and peer group play an important role which makes students comfortable. Due to the good interpersonal relationship with others in school, students feel themselves as a part of school and enjoy being in school which enhance their school engagement and involvement. This all create a positive school ethos and the perception of students regarding their school ethos may be linked with their well being. But the finding of the present study is in negative direction of our expectations. We are expecting a lot from our school and in this overloaded expectation; school is not capable to work out all its duties. As a result of this, students do not feel themselves as a part of their school. They don't feel safe at school. It also indicates about the incidences of bullying, psychological violence, and harassment in school with which students meet through. In the same light, the findings of the study are worth relevant for the reconstruction of our school system.

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